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ABSTRACT

This brief booklet was designed to provide the general public with some basic information about vocational-technical education in Hawaii. It presents a verbal and pictorial collage depicting contemporary vocational-technical education in the islands. Topics covered include the following: the challenge of vocational-technical education; history of vocational-technical education in Hawaii; new directions for vocational-technical education; the population served; the rationale for occupationally oriented instruction; curriculum articulation; degree programs at the postsecondary level; career counseling and placement; financial assistance; minicourses; industry statewide technical committees; local advisory councils; and recognition. (KC)

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Vocational Technical Education in Hawaii in Search of Excellence

October 1988

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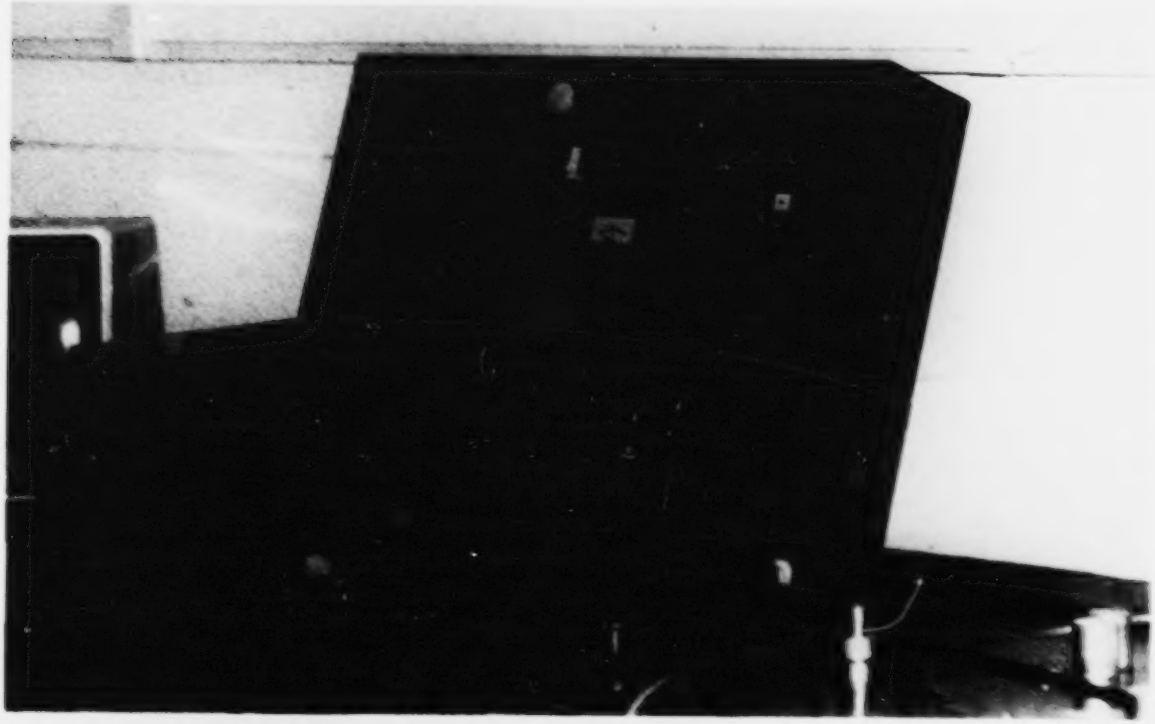
Why This Booklet

This brief booklet is designed to provide the general public with some basic information about vocational/technical education in Hawaii. It is not filled with a lot of facts or figures. These types of information are available from other more extensive resource materials. It represents a kind of verbal and pictorial collage depicting contemporary vocational/technical education in the islands.

▲ *The state is trying to "catch up" in the preparation of health care technicians.*

▲ *The tourist industry uses a large number of helicopters for sight seeing. Skilled maintenance personnel are essential.*



▲ *High tech has become a central feature of the Honolulu Community College metals technology program.*

Aviation mechanics in Hawaii are essential.

▼ *The Challenge*

Vocational education was defined by federal legislation of the 1970s as "...programs which are directly related to the preparation of individuals for...employment...."

Federal assistance to vocational education began early in this century. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was prompted by the concerns of industry that technicians with significantly higher skill levels were necessary for the development of a truly sophisticated economy. Eighty years later, there is again a concern that we may not be expanding or even maintaining the cadre of skilled persons necessary to facilitate economic expansion and ensure that the nation will continue to be competitive in the international marketplace.

In Hawaii, we are presently experiencing a situation which is as close to full employment as most economist would consider realistic. However, many people are not employed in jobs which are of a skill level that is sufficient to provide them with incomes necessary to sustain the high cost of living in these beautiful islands.

New industries requiring high skill levels are being actively urged to locate or relocate in the State. These high-technology industries will require persons with sophisticated vocational/technical training. Training programs are also necessary to prepare persons to work in the largely service-oriented occupations associated with the predominant industry in the State, which is tourism. The number and size of these existing and planned tourist oasis is impressive.

Traditional vocational/technical education is striving effectively to meet these and other training needs.

▼ *Historical Factors*

Only a few decades ago, people were limited in their career choices. For those who came as contract laborers, there was little or no choice in what they could do. It was dictated by the contract. Work on the isolated plantations in the era of premechanization was hot, hard and not very satisfying. However, if there was any one characteristic shared by each successive wave of contract laborers, it was the desire that their sons and daughters would be able to avail themselves of more satisfying work and improved economic opportunities.

Lahainaluna, the oldest vocationally-oriented high school west of the Rocky Mountains provided one such avenue for mobility and greater job satisfaction. Other high schools soon built vocational components into their curricula. This was followed by the development of postsecondary, technical schools. These were administratively reorganized in 1968 (Act 71, Session Laws of Hawaii, 1968, Chapter 305 A, Hawaii Revised Statutes). The community colleges assumed responsibility for the technical schools. By this time, all high schools had become "comprehensive." The term comprehensive to an educator means that a school not only offers general and college preparatory curricula but provides vocational/technical training options as well.

The avenue to more satisfying and rewarding job placement has been recognized through this process.

▲ *Hawaii's attempt to diversify its economy will require additional courses in such things as electronics.*

▲ *The waters around Hawaii can be dangerous. The training of water safety instructors (Recreation Instructor Program) reduce the incidence of water-related accidents.*

▼ *New Directions*

Today's student population enrolled in vocational/technical education is different from that enrolled in technical schools in

▲ *Robotics has been included in the curriculum of the Honolulu Community College metals technology program.*

1960. There were gender stereotypes, and boys built things out of metal and wood in "shop" or planted vegetables and fruits on school farms. Girls learned the rudiments of culinary arts and homemaking. Today's vocational/technical offerings have a heavy bias towards such high-tech areas as computer programming, electronics, auto mechanics, computer-assisted drafting, construction, agri-business, and word processing. Other programs have been developed in robotics and telecommunications. Laser techniques have been employed in several diverse occupational training areas. In Hawaii, we also emphasize programs designed to support the dominant food service and hotel

▲ *Computerized applications to drafting have enhanced the quality of work.*

industries. Programs designed to meet the child care needs of the working force and assistance programs for the elderly are also most necessary. Both sexes are urged to participate in any occupational training program in which they have an interest and aptitude. Special assistance is also given to special populations such as the handicapped, disadvantaged, limited English speakers, displaced workers, single heads of households and the incarcerated.

However, the primary emphasis, though, is in producing persons who can be very effective in skilled areas of economic enterprise. If there are problems in basic skills competencies which are requisite to a high level of occupational skills acquisition, these situations are also addressed.

Vocational/technical laboratories at both the secondary and postsecondary levels are innovative in design. They are organized to simulate as much as possible the environment in which students will be employed once they graduate. Cooperative education places students in actual business and industrial settings for training.

▲ *Creativity is one key to effective vocational/technical education.*

▲ *Memory typewriters, word processors, and computers have made clerical skills high tech.*

▼ *The Population Served*

Vocational/technical training increasingly serves a broad range of students. In the 1980s, about 25,000 persons were regularly enrolled in technical training programs at the secondary level. About 10,000 students were enrolled each year in the community college vocational/technical programs.

The average age of community college students is about 26. Those enrolled in all vocational courses range in age from the late teens to middle age and beyond. Many are in high school and some hold recently obtained high school diplomas, while others hold bachelor degrees. Those with university degrees often find they need specific skills training to find well-paying jobs.

▲ *Garment design and construction are an increasingly important component of Hawaii's economy.*

▼ *Occupational-Oriented Instruction is More Meaningful for Many*

Vocational/technical education is a rich mixture of "theory" and "hands-on" training. In Hawaii, we feel it is important to expediently find relevant employment in the field of training pursued once the technical education is completed. Job simulation is stressed. This kind of education allows an easier transition from formal schooling to the world of work. Generic training in the skills, which future jobs will require, makes it possible for the participants to be ready to work with a minimum of "on-the-job" training and orientation. The ability of the graduate to comprehend the realities of the work place involved makes it easier to approach the employment setting. Good basic skills and a positive attitude facilitate advancement.

▼ *Curriculum Articulation*

Efforts are being made to increase the articulation between high schools and community colleges. Articulation essentially involves giving credit for what one has learned at one level to the next. For instance, if a person has been typing 55 w.p.m. at the high school level, why should she or he enroll in a beginning course in the same skill area at the community college. In the past, it was possible to challenge a course by taking a test. However, students were intimidated by this procedure. In the future, it is hoped that the high school's teachers certification of competency will ensure that a student does not repeat a course involved in the acquisition of a skill already learned.

▼ *Degree Programs at the Postsecondary Level*

Not all students receive a degree at the postsecondary level. If they achieve a certain level of technical competence and receive an offer of employment, most vocational educators consider that person has successfully attained their occupational training objective. However, many do complete degree programs at the two-year college level and go on to achieve baccalaureate degrees at a four-year college or university. They, too, are considered successes.

▼ *Career Counseling and Placement*

Most secondary and postsecondary institutions in Hawaii have career guidance centers. Many make use of the computer-assisted Career Kokua (Help) services. All have one or more counselors with the skills and knowledge to help the students decide on an initial career or a second career. Some have placement officers. However, a lot of placement services are provided by interested and concerned teachers. This is particularly true in rural areas. Teachers working with their vocational/technical advisory councils know where the jobs are and act as matchmakers. Counselors also play a useful role in the placement process. Hawaii, at present, has a very low unemployment rate.

▼ *Financial Assistance*

Various types of scholarships and other financial assistance programs are available to motivate deserving students in Hawaii. Such assistance ranges from vocational work-study programs at the secondary level to Pell grants and loans at the postsecondary level. Any

▲ *Students learning the fine art of automotive detailing.*

▲ *Students learning the techniques of high quality food preparation.*

deserving and well-motivated student can obtain some sort of financial assistance or aid by consulting their counseling office and providing appropriate but confidential information.

▼ *Mini-Courses*

Many colleges offer short-term courses consisting of a matter of weeks. This is particularly true in the area of hotel occupations. These courses are intensive in nature and designed to assist the student to qualify for new job openings. Some hotels on the outer islands have required the services of hundreds of skilled service workers on very short notice.

▼ *Industry Statewide Technical Committees*

PL 98-524 mandated that each state set up no fewer than two technical committees each year to advise educators about on-the-job entry-level skills they feel are essential for employment, retention, and promotion in their particular field. Committees have been formed, held meetings, and validated their perceptions against those of the industry as a whole. Their findings have been published and circulated to educators by the Office of the State Director for Vocational Education.

▼ *Local Advisory Councils*

The Educational Amendments of 1976, Title II, PL 94-482 required the creation of school-wide or program-specific advisory councils. It is of the opinion of the State Director and most school and college administrators that such councils are useful. They provide a valuable mechanism to keep the curriculum relevant, the instruction pertinent and placement at acceptable levels.

▼ *Recognition*

High schools provide numerous fairs at which students can demonstrate their newly attained technical prowess. Individual schools and colleges also have their own "protocols of recognition." State high schools have done very well in the national Plymouth-AAA trouble-shooting contests. The State has also been very successful in obtaining recognition in the National Secretary's competition.

■ *For additional copies call Dr. William Boadbent at 808-373-3075 on Oahu.*

▲ *A knowledge of the basics of aquaculture is important for diversified agriculture.*